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OUTLINE STUDIES IN LITERATURE

MAUD ELMA KINGSLEY, A.M.

THE PRINCESS

(Tennyson)



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By MAUD ELMA KINGSLEY, A.M.

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OUTLINE STUDY

NO. 9


THE PRINCESS

(ALFRED TENNYSON, 1809-1892)




- A. PREPARATORY WORK. History of the Poem.
- B. FIRST READING. The Narrative of the Poem.
- C. SECOND READING. Structure of the Poem; Study of the Text.
- D. THIRD READING. Critical Study of THE PRINCESS; Famous Women of the Poem; Literary Criticism.
- E. SUPPLEMENTARY WORK. Alfred Tennyson; Theme Subjects.

A. PREPARATORY WORK




HISTORY OF THE POEM




I. HISTORY OF THE POEM

Note 1. THE PRINCESS, written at a time when the question of "Women's Rights" was beginning to make itself heard in England, was meant to be "a pleasing banter on the rights of woman." As the poem grew, however, it increased in seriousness, and became, finally, a pretentious poem of great literary merit, embodying the author's views on the woman question, and setting forth very clearly and beautifully the true relation which should exist between man and woman.

B. FIRST READING



THE NARRATIVE OF THE POEM



I. POINTS IN THE NARRATIVE TO BE ESPECIALLY NOTED

Suggestion 1. This first reading should be done in class, the whole attention being concentrated upon the narrative of the poem. Let the pupils mark, during the reading, all unfamiliar words,

phrases and allusions, to be studied later. The whole story, after the reading has been finished, should be recited from memory with the aid of the topics suggested below :—

1. The prologue.

- a. Cause of the assemblage on the lawn at Vivien Place.
- b. Sir Walter's guests.
- c. The story in *The Chronicle*.
- d. The broken statue.
- e. The legend told ; comment upon it ; Lilia's reply to this comment.
- f. Lilia's wish.
- g. Proposed plan of the story ; manner of telling it.

2. The story.

- a. Description of the Prince.
- b. The betrothal.
- c. Feeling of the Prince for the Princess ; of the Princess for the Prince.
- d. Ida's scheme of existence.
- e. The ruse by which the Prince gains admittance into the University ; the partial discovery.
- f. The complete discovery ; Ida's accident.
- g. Action of the Prince ; of the Prince's father ; of the Princess's brothers.

- h. The challenge; the tourney; result of the tourney.
- i. Fate of Psyche and Aglaia.
- j. Change in Ida's feelings.

II. CHARACTERS OF THE STORY

III. SUMMARY OF THE STORY

Suggestion 2. At the end of the first reading a summary should be made of the story. In its briefest form it should read somewhat as follows: "The Princess, Ida, has been betrothed in childhood to a prince whom she had never seen. When she becomes a woman she refuses to fulfill an engagement which was not of her own making. Marriage would interfere with her plans, which extend to the reformation and regeneration of woman; and, to carry out which, she has retired with a number of ladies from the world, and has founded a college for women exclusively. Over the gate is written,—

'Let no man enter here on pain of death.'

The Prince, who has fallen in love with a portrait and a lock of hair, endeavors to win his right by stratagem. With two friends, Cyril and Florian, he enters the college in female attire; their disguise is discovered by accident, and they are turned out of the college, the penalty of death being waived in consideration of the Prince having saved the life of Ida, who in her precipitate flight after the discovery falls from a bridge into the torrent. Meantime the king, the Prince's father, fearing for the safety of his son, has encamped with an army about the walls of the college, and retains as a hostage Gama, the father of the Princess, who has fallen into his hands. Matters lead at last to the decision of Ida's right to despise the contract by a combat between the Prince and a party of his friends, and the brothers of Ida and an equal number of their adherents. The Prince and his party are vanquished, and himself wounded. Whereupon Ida opens her gates to victor and vanquished, sets her pupils to tend on and fall in love with the hitherto detested sex, tends herself the wounded Prince, and the inevitable conclusion follows."—*North British Review*, 1848.

C. SECOND READING

STRUCTURE OF THE POEM; STUDY OF THE TEXT

I. STRUCTURE OF THE POEM

1. Theme.—The Sphere of Woman.
2. Scheme of the poem.
 - a. "*Take Lilia, then, for heroine in a dream.*"
 - b. "*We will say, whatever comes, breathing space.*"
3. Keynote of the poem.—"*Quick answered Lilia no more than that.*"
4. The motive of the poem.—"The vindication of the natural ties against the artificial and theoretical."
5. Plan of the poem.
 - a. The prologue : its value.

Note 2. "This prologue is very gracefully written, and deals, in skillful allusion, with the most remarkable characteristics of the age in which Tennyson wrote. We have the mutilated statue of Sir Ralph, a Mediæval knight, clothed playfully with silks, in ironical reference to the way we moderns treat the past. No small proportion of the prologue is occupied by pictures of the house and park of an English gentleman upon some day of fes-

tival, when the people were admitted to the latter. All this part of the poem signifies the fondness for criticising all eras, and for investigating and applying all natural powers whereby the age was especially characterized. The whole prologue impresses the reader with the notion that these first pages are in the nature of a skillful overture, and are intended to suggest the general character of the entire poem."—*North British Review*, 1848.

b. Seven cantos.

c. Intercalary songs: their value.

Note 3. They serve to keep before the reader the idea that love and marriage are best for a woman, after all.

Suggestion 3. Prove the truth of the statement made in Note 3.

6. Character of the poem.

a. The author's characterization.

b. Incongruous elements.

(1.) Classical allusions.

(2.) Mediæval customs.

(3.) Science and politics of the time in which the poem was written.

(4.) Love, tragedy, comedy, satire, modern conventionalisms, fantastic ideas.

Note 4. But *THE PRINCESS* is not wholly a medley, as it seems at the first reading. Running through this curious poem is a unity of purpose which binds all the conflicting elements into an harmonious whole, and turns that which was begun in jest into a lesson for all mankind.

7. The plot of the story of the poem.—The awakening of love in the princess Ida.

8. Subordinate episodes.

- a. Psyche and Cyril.
- b. Florian and Melissa.
- c. Aglaia.

Note 5. "The child is made the central point upon which the plot turns; for the unconscious babe is the concrete embodiment of Nature herself, clearing away all merely intellectual theories by her silent influence. Ida feels the power of the child. . . . Whenever the plot thickens the babe appears. It is with Ida on her judgment seat. In the topmost height of the storm its wail reduces her eloquent anger into incoherence. She carries it when she sings her song of triumph. When she goes to tend her wounded brothers she carries it; through it, and for it, Cyril pleads his successful suit, and wins it for the mother."—(Quoted in the *Cambridge Edition of Tennyson's Poems*.)

9. The most striking scenes:—

- a. The recognition in Psyche's class-room.
- b. The discovery in the University tent.
- c. The tourney.
- d. Ida on the battlefield.
- e. Ida and the Prince.
- f. The two old kings rolling in helpless laughter at the sight of the masquerading youths.
- g. The rescue of Ida.
- h. Ida singing the battle song.
- i. Lady Blanche arraigns Ida.
- j. The students in the University gardens.

Note 6. Observe that the plot of *THE PRINCESS* is the opposite of that of Shakespeare's *Love's Labor's Lost*; and that the child *motif* is like that of *Silas Marner*.

10. Tennyson's attitude toward the Woman Question.

- a. Note his ideal of womanhood.
- b. He pays a graceful tribute to woman in the Prince's speech to Gama.
- c. Note the words of Cyril, "*They hunt the old trails,*" etc. (A peculiarly English point of view.)
- d. "What every woman counts her due," III.
- e. Arac's views on the subject (V) are evidently those of the poet.
- f. Summing up of the matter by the Prince, VII.
- g. The poet's estimate of Ida's conduct, VI.

Suggestion 4. To what extent do you agree with Tennyson?

II. STUDY OF THE TEXT

1. Words Poetical and Archaic.

Suggestion 5. Make a list of twenty-five words used by the poet which are wholly unfamiliar to you. Define and comment upon each.

2. Passages to paraphrase.

- a. The summer of the vine in all his veins.
- b. Ere the sickle of that month became her golden shield.
- c. The Lucius Junius Brutus of my kind.
- d. The danaid of a leaky vase.
- e. They mounted Ganymedes to tumble Vulcans.
- f. Breathes full east.

- g. Who learns the one *pou sto*.
- h. The rough kex breaks the starred mosaic.

Note 7. Though weeds break the pavement. (Nothing breaks a pavement so quickly as the growth of grass through it.)

- i. With whom the bell-mouthed flask has wrought.
- j. Wailed about with mews.
- k. I led you then to all the Castalies.
- l. Not for thee, O bulbul, any rose of Gulistan shall burst her veil.

Note 8. The Bulbul is the nightingale. The Princess says, in effect, "O singer, do not suppose that any woman will be taken in by such a flimsy deceit." The bulbul loved the rose, and Gulistan means the "garden of roses." The Prince was the bulbul, the college was Gulistan, and the Princess the rose sought.—(Brewer's Handbook.)

3. Identify. (*Give context for each.*)

- a. The long-limbed lad that had a Psyche, too.
- b. He that told the Winter's Tale.
- c. He that died of hemlock.
- d. She that whispered "Asses ears" among the sedge.
- e. The airy giant's zone.
- f. Ithacensian suitors.
- g. The great dame of Lapidoth.
- h. The bearded victor of ten thousand hymns.
- i. She that talked down the fifty wisest men.
- j. She that taught the Sabine how to rule.
- k. The foundress of the Babylonian wall.
- l. The Palyrene that fought Aurelian.

4. Time and place of the action of the narrative.

a. Of the prologue.—England, 1847.

b. Of the narrative.—Norway and Russia in the Middle Ages.

Note 9. Of course the geographical situation of such a poem as this is meant to be purely fanciful ; yet it is easily seen from the text that the poet had in mind a definite locality. The Prince was of Norway, as the context shows. When he goes to seek the Princess's father, and reaches "The mother city thick with towers," he travels the route gone over of old by his Viking ancestors—the road from Norway to the Norse principality of Kieff. Kieff, the capital of the principality of the same name, is called the "Mother City of Russia." It contains the cathedral of St. Sophia with its seven towers ; hence we have in the text, "*thick with towers.*"

5. Passages to remember.

a. Follow, follow ; thou shalt win.

b. Ye are green wood ; see ye warp not.

c. To look on noble forms makes noble that which is higher.

d. Better not be at all than not be noble.

e. The highest is the measure of the man.

f. Poets whose thoughts enrich the blood of the world.

g. Sweet it is to have done the thing one ought.

h. It becomes no man to nurse despair,
But in the teeth of clenched antagonisms,
To follow up the worthiest till he die.

Suggestion 6. Give the context for each.

D. THIRD READING

CRITICAL STUDY OF THE PRINCESS; FAMOUS WOMEN OF THE POEM; LITERARY CRITICISM

I. THE PRINCESS IDA

1. Personal description.

Suggestion 7. Collect all passages furnishing information on this point, and from them prepare a pen picture of the Princess.

2. Pictures of the Princess Ida.

- a.* Ida as she is first seen by the Prince.
- b.* Ida in the lecture room.
- c.* Ida on horseback.
- d.* Ida on the judgment seat.
- e.* Ida quelling the tumult.
- f.* Ida singing the hymn of triumph.
- g.* Ida on the battlefield.
- h.* Ida and Lady Psyche.
- i.* Ida in the last scene of the poem.

Suggestion 8. Re-read each passage aloud in class.

3. Personal characteristics of Ida: Spoiled; self-willed; easily influenced; distorted idea of the sphere of woman; conceited; iron will; "crammed with erring pride"; sarcastic; love for children; didactic; a true woman at heart.

Suggestion 9. Cite an anecdote illustrating each of the above characteristics.

Note 10. To what extent do the tellers of the tale carry out their intention of making their heroine

*"Some great Princess, six feet high.
Grand, epic, homicidal?"*

4. Change in Ida's feelings.

Suggestion 10. Relate the combination of circumstances which brings about each result.

- a. From hard-heartedness to pity.
- b. From pity to love.

5. Ida's philosophy.

- a. The germ of Ida's philosophy,—*to lift the woman's III.*
- b. Her plea, V.
- c. Her arguments:—

(1.) *With equal husbandry, etc.; two heads
in council, etc.*

- d. Watchword of the woman problem.
- e. Woman's intellect compared with man's.
- f. Absurdities in Ida's philosophy.

- g.* Failure of Ida's schemes,—cause of.
- h.* Result of Ida's plans had they been realized.

II. FAMOUS WOMEN OF THE POEM

Suggestion 11. Each pupil is expected to learn the names of the women mentioned; the nationality of each; and the deed or deeds for which she is famous

a. Historical

- (1.) Artemisia.
- (2.) Clelia.
- (3.) Cornelia.
- (4.) Agrippina.
- (5.) Elizabeth.
- (6.) Joan.
- (7.) Sappho.
- (8.) Aspasia.
- (9.) Judith.
- (10.) Jael.
- (11.) Tomyris.
- (12.) Diotima.
- (13.) Sheba.
- (14.) Vashti.
- (15.) Hortensia.

b. Mythological.

- (1.) Pallas.
- (2.) Uranian Venus.
- (3.) Mnemosyne.
- (4.) Persephone.
- (5.) Hebe.
- (6.) Graces, fates, muses.
- (7.) Cassiopeia.
- (8.) Amazons.

III. LITERARY CRITICISM

1. Literary excellences of the poem.

a. Diction graceful and opulent.

Suggestion 12. Discuss, citing passages to prove your position.

b. Full of beautiful descriptive passages.

- (1.) Night at the University.
- (2.) The cataract.

Note 11. Notice in this connection the delineative pictures of Gama, Aglaia, Lady Psyche, and Melissa.

c. Abounds in fine passages.

- (1.) The lament of Lady Psyche when deprived of her child. "*Ah, me ! . . . kissing her.*"

- (2.) " *Psyche ever stole cry.*"
- (3.) " *Take it, sir calm.*"
- (4.) " *One walked heat.*"
- (5.) " *At this upon the sword she.*"
- (6.) All the songs.

Note 12. These songs are among the most beautiful lyrics in the language. Of these *The Bugle Song* is the most exquisite.

d. An excellent example of the "decorative style" in literature. (*Discuss.*)

2. Faults of the poem.

a. Wealth of adornment too great.

b. Passages too remote in allusion.

Suggestion 13. Discuss these statements, citing passages to prove your position.

E. SUPPLEMENTARY WORK



LIFE AND WORKS OF TENNYSON; THEME SUBJECTS



I. ALFRED TENNYSON

1. Significant facts in his life.
2. His most familiar poems.

Note 13. The name of Tennyson should be associated in the mind of the young student with *In Memoriam*, *The May Queen*, *Idyls of the King*, and *The Charge of the Light Brigade*.

II. THEME SUBJECTS

1. Famous Contemporaries of Tennyson.
2. Ida's Views on the Condition of Woman.
3. The Humor of THE PRINCESS.
4. Nature Studies from THE PRINCESS.
5. The Similes of THE PRINCESS.
6. Lady Blanche.
7. *It becomes no man to nurse despair*, etc.
8. Tournaments: Trial by Combat.
9. Famous Women of Antiquity.
10. The Songs of the Poem and their Setting.
11. *When did woman ever yet invent?*
12. The Bugle Song.
13. Absurdities of the Poem.
14. The Woman Problem as it Stands at the close of the Poem.
15. Description of the University.

EXAMINATION QUESTIONS



1. What social question, much discussed in 1847, suggested *THE PRINCESS* to its author? What ideas have you formed as to Tennyson's position on this question?

2. Describe, in as few words as possible, the chief events of the prologue. Relate briefly the story of *THE PRINCESS*.

3. Relate all the episodes leading up to the conception of the story of the Princess Ida. Describe the manner in which the story is told.

4. Enumerate the characters of prologue and poem, and state the part played by each in the narrative.

5. Is the setting of the poem mediæval or modern? Prove your answer.

6. *Strange was the sight and smacking of the time.* Describe the *sight* to which reference is made. What *time* is referred to and what characteristics of the period does the author have in mind? Comment upon the quoted line.

7. Name the noted women of antiquity mentioned in the course of the narrative. Describe and comment upon the manner in which their names are introduced.

8. Show the manner in which this poem, which was begun in jest, increases in seriousness as it proceeds and becomes, at the end, a very convincing exposition of the true relations which should exist between man and woman.

9. Describe the three types of women of which Tennyson intended *Ida*, *Psyche* and *Blanche* to be representative.

10. Show that *Ida*, who at first is portrayed as a caricature of the "strong-minded" woman, becomes as the story progresses, a most fascinating and feminine character.

11. Reproduce *Ida's* views (1) as to the attitude of man toward woman, (2) as to the proper relation of man to woman. Show that her whole system of philosophy is weak and artificial.

12. How does the "problem," which is the basis of the story of *THE PRINCESS*, work itself out to a satisfactory conclusion?

13. Describe in detail five scenes of the poem most interesting to you. Which seems to you the only thoroughly natural scene of the whole story?

14. Enumerate those features of the poem which justify the author's characterization of it as a "Medley." Quote Tennyson's enumeration of the incongruous elements which enter into the composition of this medley.

15. Is there anything in the lesson of *THE PRINCESS* which is as applicable to the present-day woman prob-

lem as to that of the time in which the poem was written?

16. *Maintaining that with equal husbandry
The woman were an equal to the man—*

Give the context for these lines, state their connection with the theme of the poem, and explain at some length their meaning as you understand them.

17. *For all things serve their time
Toward that great year of equal might and
rights.
They mind us of the time
When we made bricks in Egypt.*

State the circumstances under which these passages occur and paraphrase and explain each.

18. *To lift the woman's fallen divinity
Upon an even pedestal with man—*

Show that any system of reform with this as its object must necessarily fail, since it is premising a situation which does not exist.

19. As you read THE PRINCESS for the first time, what feature of it impresses you most? At what point does the narrative first arouse your interest?

20. Put into your own words the following sentences, bringing out the exact shade of meaning which the poet intends to convey: *The hand that played the patron with her curls; Caught the blossom of the flying term; The summer of the vine in all his veins; A double April old; All her autumn tresses falsely*

brown; You need not set your thoughts in rubric thus; They mounted, Ganymedes, to tumble, Vulcans; Your Highness breathes full East, etc.; Not such as moans about the retrospect; With whom the bell-mouthed flask had wrought; My foot was to you.

21. Describe in detail the picture presented by the passage in Canto V, beginning, *Then rode we with the old king across the lawns.*

22. Give the context for each of the following passages and discuss at some length (b) and (c).

(a) *Ye are green wood, see ye warp not;*

(b) *Better not be at all than not be noble;*

(c) *It becomes no man to nurse despair,
But in the teeth of clenched antagonisms
To follow up the worthiest till he die.*

(d) *Sweet is it to have done the thing one
ought;*

23. *They hunt old trails, very well,
But when did woman ever yet invent—*

State the circumstances under which this sentiment is uttered, and discuss the truth or fallacy of the statement.

24. What criticisms have you read and learned regarding the songs scattered through this poem? Quote stanzas from each song. Show that the purpose of these songs is to "keep before the reader the idea that love and marriage are best for a woman after all."

25. Learn and explain the three passages with which Tennyson closes his discussion of the "woman-rights" question :—

- (a) *The woman's cause is man's; they rise or
sink
Together, dwarfed or godlike, bond or
free;*
- (b) *For woman is not undeveloped man,
But diverse: . . .*
- (c) *. . . In true marriage lies
Nor equal, nor unequal: each fulfils
Defect in each, and always thought in
thought,
Purpose in purpose, will in will, they
grow.*

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